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MINISTERIAL DECLARATION OF THE LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES ON THE EVE OF THE THIRD UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON THE LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRIES

Brussels, 13 May 2001

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Ministerial Declaration of the Least Developed Countries on the eve of the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries Brussels, 13 May 2001

We, the Ministers of the Least Developed Countries, having met on the eve of the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries (LDC III) in Brussels on 13 May 2001,

Recalling the Ministerial Declaration of the LDCs adopted on 14 April 2001 in Havana during the South Summit,

Also recalling the Ministerial Declaration of the Least Developed Countries adopted on 18 September 2000 during the fifty-fifth session of the General Assembly of the United Nations,

Recalling further the Declaration of the Least Developed Countries adopted during the Third WTO Ministerial Conference in Seattle on 29 November 1999 and the Communiqué by the Ministers of Trade of the Least Developed Countries adopted at UNCTAD X in Bangkok on 13 February 2000,

Welcoming the adoption of the Millennium Declaration by the Heads of State and Government on 8 September 2000 at the Millennium Summit at the United Nations in New York,

Emphasizing the importance of the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries to be held in Brussels from 14 to 20 May 2001,

Declare that:

1. We meet against the backdrop of deteriorating socio-economic conditions and growing marginalization of our countries, while fundamental changes in the global economy resulting from globalization and the rapid advances in science and technology have engendered unprecedented increases in prosperity in the world. It is a matter of grave concern that, despite vigorous political and economic reform efforts, the 49 LDCs, as a group, were neither able to benefit from these global trends and developments nor realize the goals of the Paris Programme of Action for the LDCs for the 1990s. These efforts were retarded mainly by declining ODA flows, limited productive capacity, mounting debt burden, unfavourable market access conditions, inadequate FDI inflows, and severe structural handicaps faced by the LDCs.

2. We stress that, while the primary responsibility for our development rests with us, the amelioration of the worsening socio-economic conditions in the LDCs requires, among other things, substantial and concrete international support measures for these countries, including appropriate poverty eradication programmes and removing the critical structural impediments

to our development. In order to undertake that responsibility, there is need to forge partnership among Governments, international organizations and civil society, including NGOs and the private sector.

3. We attach, in this context, the utmost importance to the Third United Nations Conference on the LDCs, which we view as a great test for the principle of strengthened partnership and shared responsibility, to which we have all subscribed under the Programme of Action for the 1990s.

4. We reiterate our full commitment to a successful Conference and undertake to work closely with our development partners with a view to achieving concrete and action-oriented outcomes that can arrest and decisively reverse marginalization, eradicate poverty and thereby improve the present socio-economic conditions in our countries. The success of the Conference will thus be measured by the nature and extent of action-oriented and operational commitments that will have the greatest impact and significantly contribute to the achievement of these objectives.

5. In this spirit, we call for urgent action by our development partners, *inter alia* in the following specific areas:

- A reversal of the declining trends in ODA flows and early realization of the internationally agreed ODA targets for LDCs no later than 2005, and the improving of aid effectiveness to LDCs through, *inter alia*, untying of aid;

- Resolution of the debt crisis by providing broad, deep and immediate debt relief to all LDCs, including through total debt cancellation;

- Encouragement and promotion of FDI flows, including the provision of incentives for their investors in LDCs;

- Provision of secure and predictable market access through bound, duty-free and quota-free access for all of our products within a specified time-frame, which would enable us to participate effectively in the global economy;

- Operationalization, improvement and full implementation of the measures for special and differential treatment in favour of LDCs, as contained in the WTO Agreements;

- An early agreement, by the fourth WTO Ministerial Conference at the latest, for clear and simplified procedures aimed at facilitating and accelerating the accession of LDCs to WTO and provision of adequate financial and technical assistance to those countries.

6. We express our appreciation to those countries that have fulfilled and exceeded the internationally agreed targets of ODA for LDCs and to those that have improved market access conditions for LDCs' exports, including the Everything But Arms initiative of the European Union, and urge other development partners that have not yet done so to take similar measures for ODA and market access.

7. We attach great importance to the need for an appropriate and effective mechanism for implementation, follow-up, review and monitoring of the Programme of Action for LDCs for the first decade of the new millennium.

8. We welcome the renewed commitment by some of our development partners in improving the implementation of the Integrated Framework (IF) for Trade-related Technical Assistance for LDCs and the initiatives taken towards this end, in particular through the launching of the IF Pilot Scheme and the establishment of the IF Trust Fund. We invite our development partners to contribute generously to the Trust Fund.

9. We invite and encourage the member countries of the Group of 77 and China to continue their support for our countries in our efforts to integrate beneficially into the global economy and undertake to strengthen this partnership through South-South cooperation.

10. We call upon the United Nations system and all other multilateral organizations as well as other stakeholders to mobilize their efforts in support of the full and effective implementation of the outcome of this Conference with increased coordination, greater synergy and with full commitment.

11. We express our deep appreciation to the European Union for hosting the Conference and the support extended to our countries for the preparations undertaken at the country level. We wish to register our appreciation to all other partners who contributed generously to the success of the preparatory process of the Conference. We also express our appreciation to the Government and people of Belgium for the welcome and hospitality accorded to us. We also extend our appreciation to UNCTAD for its support to the Conference.